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16 AUG 91

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QUESTION: WHAT IS THE KHMER ROUGE STRATEGY VIS-A-VIS A CAMBODIA SETTLEMENT?

We believe the Khmer Rouge is intent on destroying the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) and in the long run regaining sole power in Phnom Penh. Khmer Rouge leaders apparently conclude, however, that they are not strong enough to achieve a military victory in the near term, and the group's overall strategy features a diplomatic campaign to ensure the Khmer Rouge a position in any post-settlement Cambodia government. (S/NF)

Senior Khmer Rouge officials have frequently expressed their alarm over the possibility of being cut out of an agreement and avoiding exclusion seems to be a key objective. They calculate that participation in a post-settlement government would allow the group to coordinate more effectively the political and military aspects of its strategy. A role in an interim arrangement would allow the Khmer Rouge opportunities to outflank its rivals or, failing that, paralyze the political process. (S/NF)

Khmer Rouge strategists believe their best chance for diplomatic survival lies with continuing to use Prince Sihanouk as a front and thus have tied the organization's fortunes to those of the Prince and the noncommunist resistance (NCR). Internationally, they want to maintain Chinese support and

Cooperation with the NCR will be a major element in Khmer Rouge planning over the next two or three years. While Sihanouk has said on a number of occasions that he would like to break with the group, Khmer Rouge President Khieu Samphan has consistently issued strong, unequivocal endorsements of the Prince and his negotiating position toward Cambodia and Vietnam. The Khmer Rouge are likely to pursue such a conciliatory line as long as it serves its ends, forming an alliance with the noncommunists if and when they judge conditions are appropriate. (S/NF)

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